

The Tawagonshi Treaty of 1613: The Final Chapter

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One of the first duties of man is not to be duped.

—Carl Becker

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RECORDED HISTORY begins with the written word. Documentary evidence converts gray areas of human history into a coherent picture of the past. Time is no longer an empty abstraction but a series of events identifiable with our own period of experience. For New York, recorded history begins with Hudson's exploratory voyage in 1609. Although other Europeans may first have sailed up the river that now bears Hudson's name, only the journal of one of the *Half Moon's* officers has survived to relate this important event. Shortly after Hudson returned to the Netherlands to report his failure to find a northwest passage to Cathay, numerous Dutch trading companies sent out ships to bring back the raw materials of the New World which Hudson had described in such glowing terms.

Regular seasonal contact with the natives along the upper Hudson probably began as early as 1611. The rush for furs had begun, and the advantage went to those traders who had the best native contacts. Little is known about these early negotiations between Dutch trader and native American. Were seasonal relationships formed and maintained? Did these relationships give one trader an advantage over another? Were trading networks established with native Americans as brokers? Such questions can only be answered by some sort of documentary evidence. Unfortunately none of the

journals or correspondence of these early Dutch traders has survived. But, what if a long lost treaty of trade and friendship concluded between the Dutch and Mohawks only four years after Hudson's voyage suddenly surfaced among the descendants of the native Americans? What would it reveal about this murky period?

Just such a document apparently did come to light in the summer of 1968 when L. G. van Loon, M.D., a resident of Kalaupapa, Molokai, Hawaii, published in *The Indian Historian* an article entitled "Tawagonshi, the beginning of the Treaty Era." The article presented the Dutch text and Van Loon's English translation of a "treaty" between two Dutch traders, Jacob Eelckens and Hendrick Christiaenssen, and four "chiefs of the Long House," named GarhatJannie, Caghneghsattakegh, Otskwiragerongh, and Teyoghswegengh. The document, dated 21 April 1613, began with the words "Here at Tawagonshi" and presented the terms of a trading agreement between the two parties. It also provided for Dutch purchase of "parcels of land," for mutual assistance in the event of food shortages, and for the settlement of differences by "a meeting of Commissaries."¹

Having presented the Dutch text and English translation of the document, Dr. Van Loon proceeded to discuss its significance as perhaps the earliest treaty between Europeans and American Indians—in this case, the Iroquois. He presented a brief exposition of the Iroquois and their early contacts with Europeans, and he discussed Dutch trading practices, stating that "in many cases" the traders were individuals who operated on their own and in other cases were financed by a second party. The Tawagonshi treaty, he suggested, was negotiated by two individuals who were probably financed by others. He infers that they were agents of "a Dutch Company."

The document itself, Van Loon stated, "was written upon two pieces of hide. It roughly measures seven and a half inches by thirteen inches, when the two pieces are placed to approximate each other, along what would be the midline." The two pieces, he said, may have once been one piece or may have been sewn together. He was vague about the provenance of the document, stating only that it "was procured through an individual who was the agent on the Missisagua Reservation in Canada many years ago. When, and under what circumstances it was originally ac-

1. L. G. Van Loon, "Tawagonshi, the beginning of the Treaty Era," *The Indian Historian* 1 (Summer 1968), 22.

quired, is unknown at this time."² Then, after referring to Canadian seizure of Iroquois records at Ohsweken in 1924, he makes the following statement: "If it be genuine, or if it is not, will make little difference so far as the contents are concerned. The matter of the contents, which have a definite historic validity, is what this article is all about."³

Van Loon then establishes that Eelckens and Christiaenssen are mentioned in other documentary sources, and he speculates about their backers. He devotes the remainder of his brief essay to the document's references to a silver chain, later Iroquois references to a metaphorical chain, and to the Iroquois allegiance to the British in the Revolution, which he relates to the Iroquois allegiance to the Dutch.

In his concluding paragraphs, Van Loon states that "Perhaps this bit of hide . . . will open up avenues of historical inquiry" to answer some of the questions that his article raises. He had earlier noted that "contemporary historical works" refer to an early treaty with the Indians but that historians were unaware of the Tawagonshi treaty: "Inquiries made to available Iroquois historians, and to the offices of both the Canadian and American agencies concerned with Indian Affairs, have met with either ignorance or silence, on the subject of the 1613 treaty."

The authors of the present article feel that there is very good reason why historians and government officials met Dr. Van Loon's "inquiries" with "either ignorance or silence." We submit that the "Treaty of Tawagonshi" is not an authentic document of 1613 but a document conceived and created in the mid-twentieth century. Though two Dutch traders named Eelckens and Christiaenssen did indeed exist (their names are in published records available in most of the larger libraries) and though there was indeed a site, two miles from Albany near the Norman's Kill, called Tawassagunshee or Tawassgunshee, the Dutch text of the treaty is marked by linguistic and historical anomalies that render its authenticity extremely unlikely.⁴

2. Van Loon, "Tawagonshi," 24.

3. Ibid.

4. Regarding the name of the site, see William M. Beauchamp, *Aboriginal Place Names of New York*, New York State Museum Bulletin 108 (Albany: New York State Education Department, 1907), 24. For the varied renderings of a single aboriginal name, see Beauchamp's discussion, *idem.*, 7.

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The treaty of 1613, if genuine, would indeed be one of the earliest records of agreement between Europeans and Native Americans. Uncritical use by historians and anthropologists could cause embarrassment; uncritical acceptance could affect present-day events and legal questions. Thus, in February 1986, the executive director of the Iroquois National Lacrosse organization proposed to Albany's Tri-Centennial Committee, among other things, a "re-enactment of the original 1613 Treaty between the Iroquois and the Dutch, symbolized by the two row wampum belt."⁵ In addition, because the treaty was made between two Dutch agents, "authorized by letter," and several chiefs of the "Long House" or League, and dealt, in one of its clauses, with the selling and purchase of land, it has implications for those who agree or disagree with the proposition that land claims against New York State are the province of the central Iroquois council, not of individual tribes. Most important, of course, is the essential role of documents in human history. If the documents are bogus, so too is the history.

The full text of the Tawagonshi document, transcribed by Charles Gehring from the photostat in the New York State Library, is as follows:

Transcription of Tawagonshi

Hier op Tawagonshi vergaderdt met ons ondergeschreeven Jacob Eelckens ende Hendrick Christiaenssen per breva geauthoriseert ende gelast de handel met de wilden Inwoonders eyghenaers ofte beheerschers van t' landt hierontrent overna te gaen ende insoverre het Compatibel met den hier na volgende sal sijn tot beslyt te coomen den Royaners der Rotinonghsiyonni GarhatJannie Caghneghsattakegh / Otskwirakerongh ende Teyoghswegengh alsmeede andere mindere overste derselve die verclaeren dat sij alles daeraen gaende overeengecoomen sijn / ende wij Participanten belooven 1: Dat de handel tusschen hun volck ende die van ons sal toegelaeten worden soolangh wij Participanten oock weedersijds Saccoordeert sijn ende verder 2: Dat wij Participanten de voorReght sullen hebben ons goederen uyt de neeringh weg te brengen midts dat eenighe Coop Verdragh aengaende deselve noch niet afgesproocken wierde: ende verder 3. Grondstucken sullen connen gecoft worden van t' Landt wij wilden Participanten als eyghen gebiedt beschouwen midts dat er overgesproocken wordt door de Individueelen ende een weedersijds geschickt Coopverdragh opgemaect wordt:

5. John W Paterson to Joan Lenden, Tri-Centennial Committee, Albany, N Y, February 7, 1986

ende verder 4: Dat wij Participanten ons sullen behouden in geval van gebreck aen voedsel die niet en toereycken sal elckander aen den noodigheden te helpen: ende verder: 5: In Casa van meening verschil betreffende louter ofte verbeelde onrechtvaerdigheden belooven wij Participanten dat deese als Auspicia Melioris Aevi sal blijven staen ende dat eenighe meening verschil van welcke aerdt ofte oorsprongh dan oock voor een vergaderingh Commissarissen sal moeten gebragt worden om het alles te ondersoecken.

Dit bovenstaende belooven wij Participanten weedersijds in Amitie ende vriendschap vol te houden ende te handhaven voor soolangh t' gras groen is ende als een bewijs van Eere ende Toegeneeghenheydt verruylen wij eene sil-verketting voor een vaedem Seewant: ende kenniss der waerheydt deeses onder-teekent door den Participanten op deese 21 Aprill 1613.

Jacob Eelckens

Hendrick Christiaenssen

GarhatJannie [] t' merck van
Caghneghsattakegh [] 't merck van
Otskwirakerongh [] 't merck van
Teyoghswegengh [] 't merck van

It will be noted that in some small particulars this transcription does not agree with Van Loon's. Whether by design or by error he made some minor mistakes in the transcription that appeared in *The Indian Historian*. The following English translation by Charles Gehring also departs in some points from that of Van Loon. In neither case, transcription or translation, are there basic differences in the two versions.

Translation of Tawagonshi

Met with us here at Tawagonshi the undersigned Jacob Eelckens and Hendrick Christiaenssen, authorized by letter and ordered to investigate the trade with the native owners or rulers of the country hereabouts, and to conclude as far as it may be compatible with the following sachems of the Long House, GarhatJannie, Caghneghsattakegh, Otskwirakerongh, and Teyoghswegengh, as well as with other lesser chiefs of the same, who declare that they all are in agreement thereon; and we, participants, promise: 1. That trade between their people and ours shall be permitted as long as we, participants, are also in mutual agreement; and further, 2. That we, participants, shall have the privilege of bringing our goods out of the trade routes, provided that no purchase agreement concerning them has yet been made; and further, 3. Parcels of land may be purchased that we, the native participants, consider as our own territory, provided that it is discussed by the individuals and a mutually agreeable purchase agreement has been made; and further, 4. That we, participants, shall continue to help one another with neces-

sities in case of shortage of food that is insufficient; and further, 5. In case of disputes relating to real or imagined injustices, we, participants, promise that this shall serve as an *Auspicia Melioris Aevi*,* and that any dispute from whatever nature or origin must then be brought before a board of magistrates in order to investigate everything

This aforementioned we, participants, promise, in amity and friendship, to sustain and maintain for as long as the grass is green; and as a token of honor and affection we exchange a silver chain for a fathom of wampum; and as acknowledgment of the truth of this, it has been signed by the participants on this 21st of April 1613.

Jacob Eelckens

Hendrick Christiaenssen

GarhatJannie [] his mark

Caghneghsattakegh [] his mark

Otskwirakerongh [] his mark

Teyoghswegeggh [] his mark

*"Omens of a better age to come." This phrase is included in many dictionaries, usually with the singular, *auspicium*; e.g., *Webster's New 20th Century Dictionary of English*. It can also be translated as "Augering well for the future." It does not quite fit in the context. The translator has never encountered this Latin phrase or any form thereof in any Dutch document.

Although Van Loon's article, with the texts of the treaty, was published in 1968, it was not brought to our attention until 1986. By then, we had dealt extensively with materials relating to Van Loon—documentary material that Van Loon had "discovered" and published, or attempted to publish; or had sold, or attempted to sell—which proved to be spurious.

One such document was a 1634 letter of Jeronimus dela Croix, a member of the expedition into the Mohawk Valley led by Harmen Meyndertsz van den Bogaert in the winter of 1634–1635. Van Loon published the letter, with his English translation, in the 1939–1940 volume of the *Dutch Settlers Society of Albany Yearbook*. He stated in his introduction that the history of the document was obscure, that it was among materials bequeathed him by one Caroline Nevins, who had died in 1938. The document, now in the New York State Library, is unquestionably a fake. It contains subtle textual errors that cast doubt on its authenticity, and laboratory tests revealed that it, and a map published with it, were written in modern pen and ink on very old paper—paper that was already ancient when the letter was written.⁶

6. Charles T. Gehring and William A. Starna, "A Case of Fraud: The Dela Croix Letter and Map of 1634," *New York History* 66 (July 1985), 249–61.

Van Loon also "discovered" an early deed to Manhattan and a 1701 map of Albany. The deed, now in the New York State Library, is an obvious fake, failing a textual analysis and laboratory tests conducted by the Art Conservation Department, State University of New York College at Buffalo.⁷ The early map of Albany is also, on the evidence of visual examination, bogus. Now in the collections of the Albany Institute of History and Art, it was acquired from Van Loon in 1963. Van Loon said that he had obtained the map, attributed to Koenrad Ten Eyck, "through an unnamed Dutch agent in the Hague." Some time later, a map of the Hudson River, also attributed to Ten Eyck, was brought to the Institute's attention by an individual identified in correspondence only as a "Hollander." He indicated that he had obtained it from Van Loon, but Van Loon, then living in Hawaii, stated that he had never seen the map. With that, his previously "voluminous correspondence" with the Institute suddenly ended.⁸

These experiences with Dr. Van Loon obviously influenced our reaction to the publication of the Tawagonshi treaty. We learned that Van Loon had made previous efforts to publish the document. In June 1959, he responded to a published call for manuscripts from Richard Amerman, editor of *De Halve Maen*, the publication of the Holland Society of New York, with a sixteen-page paper on the Tawagonshi treaty and a photostat of the document. He stated that he had obtained the document from a relative, a Major William C. van Loon, who had served in the office of Indian agent at the Missassagas Reserve on the Grand River from 1903 until 1927.⁹

The editors of *De Halve Maen* sent Van Loon's paper and the treaty document to a group of evaluators who included Milton W. Hamilton, at that time Senior Historian of the New York State Education Department; Albert B. Corey, State Historian; and William N. Fenton, then director of the New York State Museum. J. Howard Haring, a handwriting expert, was also asked for his professional opinion. Haring had been the star witness at the 1935

7. The deed is the subject of a forthcoming article by Charles Gehring and William Starna. It was laboratory-tested by the Art Conservation Department, then located in Cooperstown, New York, in January 1985 when the department tested the Dela Croix letter.

8. Norman S. Rice, Curator, Albany Institute of History and Art, Albany, to A. Hyatt Mayor, Curator, Department of Prints, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, November 26, 1963; Norman S. Rice to Douglas E. Leach, Associate Professor of History, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, March 23, 1964; Richard H. Amerman to the Editorial Sub-Committee, September 4, 1959. Correspondence of the Editor, The Holland Society, New York, N. Y.

9. Memorandum of Richard H. Amerman to the Editorial Sub-Committee, September 4, 1959. Correspondence of the Editor, The Holland Society.

trial of Bruno Richard Hauptmann, accused of kidnapping Charles Lindbergh's baby son.¹⁰

Following further examination by the editorial sub-committee of *De Halve Maen*, the general reaction was that while supporting evidence was sketchy, much of Van Loon's paper did "dovetail into a pattern of lucidity."¹¹ William Fenton, however, did not agree. In a long letter to Amerman, he expressed his skepticism of the purported treaty. Among other things, he noted of the document that:

No Dutch writer for a century afterward spelled Mohawk that well. The names are in the orthography of the Anglican missionaries who commenced work in the Mohawk Valley in the second quarter of the 18th century and continued on the Six Nations Reserve in Canada after the American Revolution. They are also in the orthography employed by Horatio Hale, the American philologist who published *The Iroquois Book of Rites*. . . .¹²

He also pointed out that the names of the Iroquois chiefs listed in the document were, in fact, Iroquois place-names that had been published in the work of Hale and others.¹³

The editor and staff of *De Halve Maen* tried for a number of years to ascertain the authenticity of the Tawagonshi treaty. Evaluators did not always agree, and at times were ambiguous in their responses and conclusions. For his part, Van Loon did not reply to requests from the editor to provide either a more legible copy of the treaty or the original document itself, which The Holland Society would have insured "in whatever capital amount" Van Loon wished.¹⁴

In the early 1960s, early in the administration of Governor Rockefeller, as *De Halve Maen* continued to ponder his paper, Van Loon offered to sell the Tawagonshi treaty to the State of New York. The asking price ran to five figures. The governor's office referred this matter to the then state librarian, Dr. Charles Francis Gosnell, who solicited the opinion of Fenton, who was then Assistant Commissioner of the State Museum, and the late Edwin R. van Kleeck, an authority on the Dutch settlers. Based on the considered opinion of both men, the state decided to refuse Van Loon's offer.¹⁵

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. William N. Fenton to Richard H. Amerman, December 30, 1959

13. Ibid.

14. Wilfred B. Talman, New York, to Richard H. Amerman, March 14, 1960; Dr. Simon Hart, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, to Richard H. Amerman, August 10, 1960; Richard Amerman to L. G. van Loon, M.D., October 27, 1959. Correspondence of the Editor, The Holland Society.

After a long delay, with no further action on the part of the editor of *De Halve Maen*, Van Loon wrote to The Holland Society and requested that his manuscript and photostat be returned.¹⁶ This was done in April 1967, accompanied by the following explanation from the editor:

Despite very considerable efforts we were unable to establish a factual basis for placing Eelckens and Christiaenssen at the locale in April, 1613. All of us regretted, too, that the document itself could not be made available for our inspection. In these circumstances the decision taken was not to publish.¹⁷

The whole package was later submitted to *The Indian Historian* and published in 1968.

The publication of the treaty, to quote Francis Jennings, "made a small stir," but historians and anthropologists were not in agreement regarding its authenticity.¹⁸ In his essay, "Mahican," in Bruce Trigger's *Handbook of North American Indians* (1978), T. J. Brasser accepts without question the validity of the document. He seems, however, to relate the treaty to the Mahicans as well as to the Mohawks. Noting the preservation of "this treaty" in the oral tradition of the Mohawks, Delaware, and Mahicans, he states that these traditions have "received considerable support with the publication of the original document of the treaty, acquired from the Iroquois on the Grand River Reserve in Canada."¹⁹ The documents that Brasser cites in support of the tradition allude to an ancient covenant, but in vague terms. In their essay, "Mohawk," which appeared in the same volume of Trigger's *Handbook*, William Fenton and Elisabeth Tooker are much more reserved about the Tawagonshi treaty. They note the tradition that a treaty was made by the Dutch, Mohawk, and Mahicans in 1618 and that "what was presented as the document of that treaty has been published (Van Loon, 1968)." They then note that George T. Hunt's *The Wars of the Iroquois* (1940) and Allen W. Trelease's *Indian Affairs in Colonial New York: The Seventeenth Century* (1960) argue that a Dutch-Iroquois treaty of such early date was unlikely. They offer no

15 William N. Fenton, "Iroquois Political History: an Anthropological View," paper presented at the Forty-Fourth Conference on Early American History, Williamsburg, Virginia, March 30-31, 1984.

16 L. G. van Loon to Editor, *De Halve Maen*, March 29, 1967. Correspondence of the Editor, The Holland Society.

17 Richard H. Amerman to L. G. van Loon, April 25, 1967. Correspondence of the Editor, The Holland Society.

18 Francis Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire* (New York, London, 1984), 54.

19 T. J. Brasser, "Mahican," in *Handbook of North American Indians, Northeast*, ed. Bruce G. Trigger (Washington, D.C.: The Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 15:202.

explicit opinion of their own, but state, "although some scholars accept the validity of the document ('Mahican,' this vol.) others do not."²⁰

A few years later, in his 1982 article, "Rediscovered Links in the Covenant Chain . . .," published in the *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, Daniel Richter appears to accept the treaty's authenticity. He suggests that newly-discovered records of early Indian negotiations, which include consistent references to a treaty with a man named "Jacques," support Iroquois tradition of an early treaty. "Jacques," he suggests, was Jacob Eelckens. Richter qualifies his acceptance of the Tawagonshi document with the cautionary "If the treaty is genuine . . .," but also states, "Despite its rather suspicious origins, the document has an authentic ring," and, regarding the document's references to certain trading privileges, "It is difficult to imagine a latter-day forger concocting such a cryptic passage." He also points out that T. J. Brasser had mistakenly identified the treaty's Indian signatures as Mahican rather than Iroquois, presumably Mohawks, and discusses the Indians' names and collective titles to prove the point.²¹ Francis Jennings, in *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire* (1984), states that Richter's newly-discovered documents "seems to add substance" to the Tawagonshi document, but urges caution in the acceptance of any alleged treaty made so early. Of the Tawagonshi treaty, he states, "This so-called treaty could not possibly have obligated any Dutchmen except those of a trading ship, and we have seen what they were like."²²

In *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy* (1985), edited by Jennings, William N. Fenton, Mary A. Druke, and David R. Miller, the editors include a "Descriptive Treaty Calendar"—a chronological summary of European-Iroquois negotiations and related events from 1613 to 1913. Of the 1613 document, which heads the list, they state:

A treaty of friendship may have been made between some Iroquois and a Dutch trader at "Tawagonshi." The authenticity of the sole document referring to this event is highly questionable. A photostatic copy is in the New York State Library, manuscripts division.²³

20. William N. Fenton and Elisabeth Tooker, "Mohawk," in Trigger, *Handbook*, 15:468.

21. Daniel K. Richter, "Rediscovered Links in the Covenant Chain: Previously Unpublished Transcripts of New York Indian Treaty Minutes, 1677-1691," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 92 (pt. 1) (1982), 51, 51n., 52-55.

22. Jennings, *Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*, 54.

23. Francis Jennings, et al., *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy* (Syracuse, 1985), 158.

The treaty purportedly involved two Dutch traders, not one, but in any case the statement is the strongest published expression of doubt about the document. It does not, however, reject it outright. Scholarly opinion of the treaty document therefore ranges from relatively unqualified acceptance to extreme doubt. Those who question the document, as has been noted, do so because of various historical factors, such as the early date of the treaty. These factors are compelling enough. When we examine the Dutch language of the document itself, its forms, the penmanship employed—in short, internal evidence—it becomes clear that the Tawagonshi treaty document is not authentic, that it was not composed in 1613 by two Dutch traders, but many years later by a twentieth-century hand and mind.

The following details found in the treaty are pertinent in an evaluation of its authenticity: The treaty was negotiated on April 23, 1613, at a place called Tawagonshi in the vicinity of what is today Albany. It was signed by two Dutchmen, Jacob Eelckens and Hendrick Christiaenssen, along with four Iroquois chiefs identified as “Royaners der Rotinonghsiyonni.” Their names, with their totems appended, are listed individually at the bottom of the document. The treaty is written in the voice of the Indians. Finally, a “silver chain” is exchanged for a fathom of “Seewant” in closing the treaty.

To begin with, the document’s vocabulary and phraseology are untypical of comparable seventeenth-century Dutch records. The text is simply anomalous. For example, *soolangh t’ gras groen is* (so long as the grass is green) is a metaphor familiar to present-day Americans from film and fiction but is not a seventeenth-century form. *Coop verdragh* (purchase agreement) appears to be a dictionary construction by someone unaware of the frequently attested *coop cedul* and *coop brief* for this legal instrument. Other words or combinations that appear odd or suspiciously modern in a seventeenth-century document are: *per breva* (by letter); *compatibel* (compatible); *louter* (real); *vol te houden* (to continue); *overna te gaen* (to examine); *gebrek aen* (shortage of); *in casa van* (in case of); and *meening verschil* (difference of opinion).

The script of the document is suspicious in the extreme: The signatures of the two Dutchmen are in the same hand, and that of Jacob Eelckens does not match an authentic autograph from the notarial archives in Amsterdam. The handwriting throughout is a clumsy blend of seventeenth- and twentieth-century graphemes: Upper case E’s and C’s carefully follow known seventeenth-century

configurations; however, the upper case A's, D's and J's are unauthentic and quite modern. Some of the lower case letters such as the e's and d's are carefully formed according to seventeenth-century style, but most of the other letters either depart from seventeenth-century forms or are constructed in a labored style without the usual variation found in natural writing. The handwriting, furthermore, does not have the physical characteristics associated with the use of a quill pen, which would have produced lines of uneven density, growing progressively fainter as the pen emptied. This conclusion is, of course, based on examination of a photostat, since the "original" has never been seen by anyone associated with the document except Dr. Van Loon, who stated that it was written upon two pieces of hide. The material looks more like paper.

This, of course, raises the question, originally put by the editor of *De Halve Maen*, about the location of the original document. The question remains unanswered. In the 1960s, Dr. Van Loon made a commonplace book entitled "Voetstaple achter Weege" (Ramblings along the way), which he gave to the New York State Historical Association library in 1981. Handwritten in ornate calligraphy by Dr. Van Loon, and bound by him, the book comprises Dr. Van Loon's thoughts, expressed in Low Dutch, on a variety of subjects. It includes the Tawagonshi treaty, also entered in ornate calligraphy, at the end of which he inscribed, probably at a later date, "This original piece of skin was given by the owner in 1978 to Lee (*sic*) Shenandoah and Irving Powless two chiefs of the Onondagas for safekeeping in Syracuse, N. Y. headquarters of the Rot-nonghsijonnie." (Translated by Charles Gehring.) Informants confirm that this document is in the possession of the Grand Council at Onondaga, but indicate that it is written on paper, not on skin or hide. Regarding the text that was published in *The Indian Historian*, a footnote to Van Loon's article states: "The photostat of the Tawagonshi Treaty is in the possession of Doctor Van Loon; a copy is in the archives of the American Indian Historical Society." Neither the Society, nor the director of Special Collections at the Rupert Costa Library of the American Indian, University of California, Riverside, a depository for some of the Society's records, were able to locate the photostat.²⁴

Whatever the physical state of the document, it fails the tests of language form and usage. In addition to anomalies already noted, the document contains expressions that were not in use in 1613,

24. See Van Loon, "Tawagonshi," 22, 24; William A. Starna to Jeannette Henry, August 5, 1986; William A. Starna to Clifford R. Wurfel, September 22, 1986; Clifford Wurfel to William A. Starna, September 25, 1986, all in the files of William A. Starna

though they appear many years later. For example, *Royaners*, or correctly *Rotiyaners* (chiefs of the Iroquois Confederacy), is a term that does not appear in the literature until 1724. The treaty's reference to a "silver chain," a metaphor for covenants between the Iroquois and the Europeans, is highly suspicious. The term does not appear in documents until 1677. In earlier years the metaphors for covenants were "rope" and "iron chain."²⁵ The term *Rotinonghsiyonni*—a good Mohawk word for "People of the Longhouse" or the League—first appears, albeit in its Huron form, "Hotinnonchiendi," in the *Jesuit Relations* of 1654 (41:87). A variant, "Kanosoni," appears in the Van den Bogaert journal of 1634–35.²⁶

As previously mentioned, the names of the Iroquois Indians listed on the document are actually place-names that appear in Horatio Hale's "Iroquois Book of Rites." Specifically, they represent abandoned towns of the Wolf, Bear, and Turtle clans. Even stranger are the clan totems drawn next to the Indian names on the treaty. At no time were totem symbols used on Dutch documents or treaties of any sort. This was the practice of the English period of New York history. The document's format does not resemble recognized and standardized treaty formats from the Dutch period. In addition, it is written in the voice of the Indians and, unlike any treaty we know of, it was given to them following its signing and not retained by the Dutchmen. It is difficult, in any case, to understand why the Dutchmen sought to make a treaty with the Iroquois, specifically the Mohawks, in 1613 when this entire region of the Hudson Valley, including the site of Tawagonshi, was firmly under Mahican control.²⁷ Furthermore, Eelckens and Christiaenssen were licensed, private traders without authority to make treaties. Since they were licensed, there was no reason for them to make any additional arrangements with the Indians.

25. Francis Jennings discusses these usages in *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*, 54–55, 149, 167. See also Jennings, et. al., *Iroquois Diplomacy*, 116–17.

26. William N. Fenton, "Northern Iroquois Culture Patterns," in Trigger, *Handbook*, 15:312; J. F. Lafitau, *Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times*, edited and translated by William N. Fenton and Elizabeth L. Moore (Toronto, 1974); H. M. van den Bogaert, "Narrative of a Journey into the Mohawk and Oneida Country, 1634–1635," *Narratives of New Netherland*, edited by J. F. Jameson (New York, 1909), 152. In the Jameson edition the word is mistranscribed as "franosoni." It is correctly transcribed as "kanosoni" in a new translation, by Gehring and Starna, of the original manuscript in the Huntington Library, San Marino, California. See journal entry of January 3, 1635 in Gehring and Starna, *A Journey Into Mohawk and Oneida Country, 1634–1635: The Journal of Harmen Meyndertsz van den Bogaert* (forthcoming 1988, Syracuse University Press).

27. George T. Hunt, *The Wars of the Iroquois* (Madison, 1940); Brasser, "Mahican," 198, 202. It is for this reason, perhaps, that Brasser assumed the treaty was with the Mahicans.

From reliable and authenticated documentation, the earliest recorded and formal trade agreement between the Dutch and the Iroquois took place in 1634. This was actually a renegotiation of a previous agreement, exact date unknown, but certainly made after the establishment of Fort Orange in 1624. The first treaty of friendship was not made until 1643.²⁸

Perhaps the most intriguing physical aspect of the Tawagonshi document is that it is written in a hand that resembles that of the Dela Croix letter and map and other documents associated with Dr. Van Loon. The pen strokes and handwriting style, in fact, very closely resemble Van Loon's own handwriting.²⁹ This obviously raises the question of the authorship of the Tawagonshi document, and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that he was directly involved in the production, and certainly in the promotion, of this and a number of other documents. If this conclusion is correct, it raises questions about the man and the motivation. Answers are not easily forthcoming, but some information is available to soften the enigma.

Lawrence Gwyn van Loon was born in New York City in 1903, the son of Frank and Waletta Hill van Loon. He was a direct descendant of Jan van Loon, who emigrated from Luyck, now in Belgium, to New Netherland in the seventeenth century. The Van Loons moved to Reading, Pennsylvania, when L. G. Van Loon was ten, but they must have visited his Mohawk Valley grandparents frequently since he became interested in the old New York Dutch dialect through contact with his maternal grandfather, Walter Hill, who then lived in St. Johnsville, New York. A self-educated school teacher, who taught in several Mohawk Valley villages, Hill began compiling a grammar and vocabulary of the Low Dutch dialect in 1869 when it was still in use by various residents of his area. He taught the young Van Loon to speak the Mohawk Valley variation of the dialect. Van Loon accompanied his father or grandfather on visits to people who still knew the dialect, and when he was still in his teens began writing down what he had heard, though he had difficulty, he said, trying to reproduce sounds on paper. In later years he toured the Hudson Valley and the lower Mohawk in search of anyone who spoke the old dialect, but without success.³⁰

28. Van den Bogaert, "Narrative of a Journey into the Mohawk and Oneida Country"; A. J. F. van Laer, editor, *Minutes of the Court of Fort Orange and Beverwyck, 1657-1660* (Albany, 1923), 2:215.

29. There are many Van Loon letters in the Van Cleef Bachman Papers, New York State Historical Association, Cooperstown, New York. For handwriting comparisons, see especially "Voetstaple achter Weege" and Van Loon to Alice P. Kenney, February 10, 1982, filed in the inside front cover of the book.

Van Loon was graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1927 and received the M.D. degree with the first class to graduate from Thomas Jefferson University's Jefferson Medical College, in 1931. He studied in the Netherlands at the clinic of Professor Van Rooy in the summer of 1931 and again in 1932. In that year he married Grietje Prins of Aalsmeer, the Netherlands. Van Loon found that his New York Dutch was "an oddity (to say the least)" among the Dutchmen he attempted to speak with. He added that "They sure changed me more than I changed them!"³¹ Though notes in the Van Cleef Bachman Papers at the New York State Historical Association indicate that Bachman considered Van Loon "only moderately fluent" in Dutch, Van Loon did publish two articles in that language: "*Ave atque Vale: Jersey Lag Duits verdwijnt*," *Onze Taaltuin*, VIII: 3 (July 1939), 91-95; 1 (Aug., 1939), 107-109; and "Hedendaagsche Nederduitsche cultuursporen uit de XVII in New York en New Jersey," *Eigen Volk* XI (1939), 337-344. He also published a study of the old New York dialect, *Crumbs from an Old Dutch Closet: The Dutch Dialect of Old New York* (The Hague, 1938). He clearly had the respect of scholars Van Cleef Bachman and Alice P. Kenney.

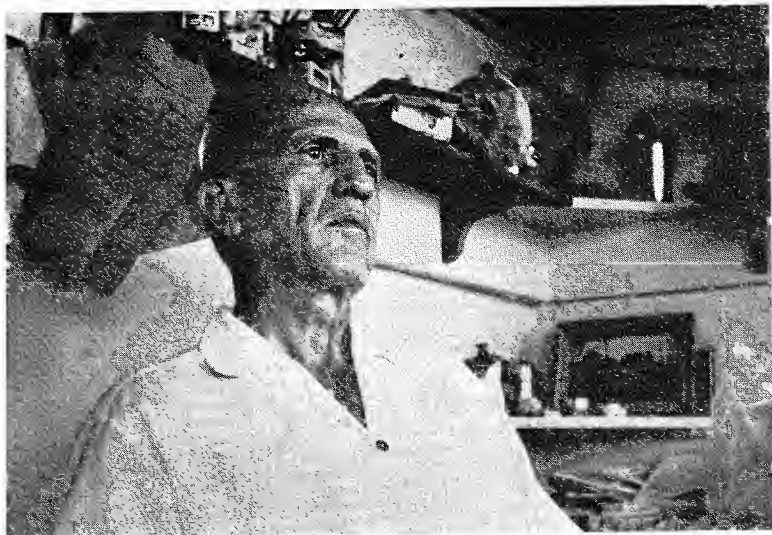
Van Loon practiced medicine in Reading, Pennsylvania, in the 1930s and 1940s. In 1955 he became medical director of the Kalaupapa mission in Molokai, Hawaii and served there until 1968. He was then associated with the Cresson, Pennsylvania, State School and the Wassaic, New York, State School. He retired to Gloversville, New York in 1982. His interest in the Low Dutch dialect of New Netherland and New York led to a long cooperative effort with Van Cleef Bachman, author of *Peltries or Plantations: The Economic Policies of the Dutch West India Company in New Netherland, 1623-1639*. Bachman devoted many years to the compilation of a dictionary of the dialect, based in part on the foundation of Walter Hill's early studies.³²

Van Loon's last publication, in collaboration with Bachman and Alice P. Kenney, was "'Het Poelmeisie': An Introduction to the Hudson Valley Dutch Dialect," which appeared in the April 1980

30 Bernhard H. M. Vlekke and Henry Beetz, *Hollanders Who Helped Build America* (New York, N.Y.: American Biographical Company, 1942), 269; Van Cleef Bachman, Alice P. Kenney, Lawrence G. van Loon, "'Het Poelmeisie': An Introduction to the Hudson Valley Dutch Dialect," *New York History* 61 (April 1980), 167-69; Van Loon genealogy, Van Cleef Bachman Papers, New York State Historical Association library.

31. Bachman, Kenney, Van Loon, "Het Poelmeisie," 169

32. Van Loon genealogy and correspondence, Bachman Papers; Van Loon to Kenney, February 10, 1982, in "Voetstapen achter Weege." Bachman eventually abandoned his plans for the dictionary. His dictionary notes and other materials are in the Bachman Papers.



Lawrence G. van Loon, probably in the late 1970s. Photo in the Van Cleef Bachman Papers, New York State Historical Association.

issue of *New York History*. It presents Van Loon's Low Dutch text, with English translation by Bachman, of what purports to be a New York Dutch folktale—the story of a young Albany boy beguiled by a mysterious and beautiful maiden whom he encounters at a forest pool. Though the authenticity of the tale as a product of the culture of the New York Dutch can neither be proved nor disproved in the absence of documentation, it does raise inevitable questions. The motif itself is found in various mythologies, including the Germanic myth of the Lorelei. According to Van Loon the tale was recited to him “by Mrs. Dewitt Lynck of Glenville Village, New York, about 1915. From where she derived the story, I have no idea.” Van Loon stated that Mrs. Lynck said to him, “Ek sal joe en vertessel vertrekke in Lag Duits bekosamdat het klenk niet dezelief in Engels!” (I’ll tell you a story in Low Dutch, since it doesn’t sound the same in English.)³³ Van Loon was twelve at the time, and the story, as printed in *New York History*, is almost 300 lines long! Even if he wrote it down soon afterward, it was a prodigious task, though he states only that he tried to memorize it. In the introduction to the tale, Van Cleef Bachman warns that because Dr.

33 Bachman, Kenney, Van Loon, “Het Poelmeisie,” 165, 167.

Van Loon had visited the Netherlands, was married to a Dutch woman, and had a good reading knowledge of modern Dutch and seventeenth-century Dutch, the language of the tale may contain "interference" from non-Low Dutch sources. He adds, "These cautionary comments should in no way detract from the value of Dr. Van Loon's effort, a unique attempt to evoke the spirit of the Low Dutch people by the last real speaker of the dialect."³⁴

Perhaps so, but our own investigation revealed an important point: Mrs. Dewitt Lynck's maiden name was Mary Jane Lowe. Neighbors who remember her note that she was not Dutch and did not speak Dutch in any form, and that her ancestry was Scotch. She pronounced her maiden name, Lowe, to rhyme with cow. Dr. Van Loon insisted that it rhymed with go.³⁵ It is of interest that Van Loon includes extensive statements in Low Dutch from Dewitt

34. Ibid., 170-71.

35. Interview with Donald A. Keefer, Amsterdam, N.Y., December 12, 1986. The death certificate of J. DeWitt Lynk (*sic*) is with the Van Loon genealogy, Bachman Papers.

✧ TAWAGONSHI ✧

End nou, dat solles' scheen neergeschreeve te weeze, end
de schryver (prenter?) hee zoo veel bladzide volgekrobbelt
met uitgedrukt gedachte, nen laotst analysis' brocht hem
te weeze dat hy hee nog aol s'andeng dattie moet lange
aon en met blongstálleng wochten' publiek (sic?)

Speesjal dat die "voetstappe" gaone zoo dekkels' tussenin,
over, end longes' de spoore van anz verdoewene Ligg Duits'
vooroudez end hullies' dazge van glorie.

End ook bekas'and'at hullies' voetstappe toen zoo dekkels'
longes' end mette voetstappe van de ook longverdoewene
wede genge.

Dat de memorie van deest' vrend'lik moeteng tusse
LiggDuits'er end wold zal ook niet gaone verdoewne, voeg elz
de hierachter volgend' stuk prente - zongand en verbandeng dat
was verlonge nen ket vier jaore naodat Hendrik Hudson
voor teest' zeild op de Noord Rivier. End nou, gecorrasseyt
van die oud document;

The introduction to the Tawagonshi text as inscribed in Van Loon's "Voetstappe Achter Weege." Special Collections, New York State Historical Association.

"gebrek aen voedsel die niet en toereycken s'al eldzander
 "aen den noodigheden te helpe; ende verder 5: In cass van
 "meening verschil betreffende Lauter ofte verbeedte onrecht-
 "vaerdigheden belooven, wy Participanten dat deese als
 "Auspicia melioris aevi s'al blijven staen ende dat eenighe
 "meening verschil van welcke aerdt ofte oorsprongh dan
 "ook voor een vergaderingh Commissarissen s'al moete gebraght
 "worden om het alles te ondersaken. Dit bovengstaende be-
 "loove wy Participanten wederzijts in Amicitie end vriendschap
 "vol te houden ende te handhaven voor soo langh 't gras groen is
 "ende als een bewys van Eere ende toegeneeghenheit verruyje
 "wy eene zilverketting voor een vaddem Secwant / ende kennis
 "der waerheit deeses onder teekent door den Participanten op
 "deese 24 April 1613."

Jacob Elkens

Hendrick Christiaenssen

Garhat Jannie (totem) 't merck van
 Caghneghsattabegh (totem) 't merck van
 Oskwiragerangh (totem) 't merck van
 Teuyghsivegengh (totem) 't merck van

(Deze correspondentie stuk viel ez in 1978 deur de inaar overgeve aan
 Lee Shenandoeh end Irving Powless twee "niefs" van d'oudste gae voor
 betrouwen tot Syracuse, N.Y. de hoofdoffis van de Robinsonrijannie.)

The concluding lines of the Tawagonshi treaty, with the 1978 statement appended. From
 Van Loon's "Voetstapen Achter Weege." Special Collections, New York State Historical
 Association.

Link (*sic*) and Mrs. Link in *Crumbs from an Old Dutch Closet*
 (pp. 23-25).

Even if the provenance of "Het Poelmeisie" is no more than
 questionable (and we consider it highly questionable), there is no
 doubt about a Van Loon connection with clearly bogus materials
 like the Dela Croix letter, the Tawagonshi treaty, the deed to
 Manhattan, and the map of Albany. Was he capable of producing
 such materials? He knew Dutch, modern and seventeenth-century
 forms, very well, if not perfectly. And he was intensely interested in
 Dutch culture and history. He was for some years the archivist and
 translator of the highly esteemed Association of Blauvelt Descen-
 dants, a member of The Holland Society from 1935 to 1941 and
 1951 to 1956, and a member of the Dutch Settlers Society of
 Albany. He was interested in inks and etching and calligraphy. In a
 letter to Alice Kenney he mentions rewriting his commonplace
 book, "Voetstapen," after "I discovered a British made calligraphic
 pen!" He states in the same letter,

I had some paper, of Dutch origin, procured in the 1932-35 period from the Thomas Fairbanks company in New York, a prestigious firm in the paper trade. It was the time when I was interested in paper, and having fallen under the spell of Joseph Pennell whose opinions in the field of etching were quite pronounced. And quite healthy I hunted for handmade paper, wherever I thought it might be, for it was an art (papermaking) that was rapidly disappearing.

Van Loon also told Kenney that while at Kalaupapa, where numbers of deer were shot in season, he experimented with tanning and successfully tanned some deer hide, a strip of which he used to bind his "Voetstaple."³⁶

Van Loon clearly had the intelligence and skills, both in language and in technology, to attempt forgeries of early seventeenth-century documents. The fact of his knowledge coupled with the evidence of his handwriting, as it appears in his own work and in bogus documents, makes a compelling case against him. But to what end? It can only be said that he was of a whimsical turn of mind, as is revealed in the memories of those who knew him, in his letters, and in his "Voetstaple," and that, according to a close acquaintance, he "liked to poke fun at the establishment," referring to the scholarly establishment, who, in Van Loon's mind, "think they know so much."³⁷

Van Loon died on November 7, 1985, having spent his last years living in Gloversville, New York. Carved on his gravestone, in a language that Van Loon described as a survival of the original Dutch settlers, is an epitaph that he himself composed: *Te kome tot vrede moet neneeder eie belydenis doene*. "To find peace, each must make his own confession."

36 Van Loon to Kenney, February 10, 1982, in "Voetstaple achter Weege." The exclamation point is his.

37 Keefer interview, December 12, 1986.